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EXAMINER
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ALVAREZ, RAQUEL

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3688

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PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.



### DETAILED ACTION

1. This office action is in response to communication filed on 6/5/2009.
2. Claims 1-26 are presented for examination.

### **Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103**

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thomson et al. (US 2003/0061104, hereinafter Thomson) in view of article by Sally Trelford titled, "Choice rewards", hereinafter Trelford.

With respect to claims 1, 8, 15, 16, 23, 24-25, Thomson teaches a network system connected with an Online service provider (GSP) selling goods-or services to an Online customer through the network system (Figure 13). A networked server managed by an after-sales-service and customer care (ASCC) center connected through said network system to a customer's computer having an ASSC server for allowing said customer to select and receive an electronic ASCC voucher defining an ASCC program and representing a value corresponding to a selection and purchase of said ASCC program made by said customer related to sales of said goods-or-services wherein said electronic ASCC vouchers are provided for transmitting over said network to said customer to control and transmit said electronic voucher for paying for said

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ASCC program by using said value represented by said ASCC voucher (i.e. the user logs onto the warranty administrator's web site to purchase the warranty of the product purchased, the conditions and terms of the warranty are transmitted to the customer electronically) [0053 0054 0055 0057 0102 0109].

With respect to the newly amended feature of the after-sales service and customer care provider selected by said customer. Thomson on paragraph 0081 teaches the customer purchasing an after-sales services such as a warranty. Thomson doesn't specifically teach independent service providers selectable by the user. Trefold teaches individual receiving performance vouchers which allows the individuals to choose their own reward and allowing the individuals to select the service provider in which to redeem the services (see pages 2-3). It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included in the after sales services of Thomson the teachings of Trefold for allowing the customer to select the care provider of their choice in order to provide **versatility** (in Trefold, page 3, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph).

With respect to claims 2, 9, 17, the combination of Thomson and Trefold teach receiving an electronic voucher for making payment to a care service provider, Trefold teaches receiving performance vouchers which allows the individuals to choose their own reward and allowing the individuals to select the service provider in which to redeem the services (see pages 2-3). It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included the teachings

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of Trefold of allowing the customer to transmit the performance voucher (electronic voucher) as payments or rewards for the service received in order to compensate the service providers of their choice. With respect to providing the vouchers over the network as a computer file. Official Notice is taken that it is old and well known to provide data as computer file over the network in order to provide convenience. It would have been obvious in the combination of Thompson and Trefold to have included providing the vouchers as a computer file over the network in order to provide convenience in managing and transmitting the performance vouchers.

With respect to claims 4-5, 11-12, Thomson further teaches transmitting said ASCC voucher from said Online customer and providing direct contact between the online customer and ASCC provider to enable to arrange for said ASCC program [0102 0109].

With respect to claims 6, 13, 18, 19, Thomson further teaches an after-sales service and customer care (ASCC) center further includes an ASCC database for keeping a record related to and defined by said ASCC program [0055].

With respect to claims 7, 14, Thomson further teaches organizing ASCC database according to said online GSP, said online customer and said ASCC provider [0085 0086].

With respect to claims 20, the limitations were previously addressed above in the rejection to claims 4-5, 11-12, and therefore rejected under similar rationale.

With respect to claims 21, Thomson further teaches an after-sales service and customer care (ASCC) center for issuing said electronic ASCC voucher and for coordinating, tracking, and carrying an insurance policy for said ASCC program [0062 0090].

Claims 3, 10, further recite the after-sales service customer care (ASCC) center providing an incentive voucher for enabling said customer to reward said ASCC provider according to a customer satisfaction assessment by said customer. Thomson teaches that the warranty administrator issues satisfaction surveys to the customer in which the customer can rate the service received [0081]. Thomson does not specifically disclose using the incentive voucher/ satisfaction assessment as a form of rewarding the service provider for the service received. Trelfold on the other hand, teaches issuing retail vouchers for individual performance (page 2). It would have been obvious for a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included in the system of Thomson the teachings of Trelfold of using the incentive vouchers/satisfaction assessment as a form of rewarding the service provider for the service provided because such a modification would motivate the service providers to increase productivity and quality.

With respect to claims 22 and 26, Thomson teaches a network system connected with an Online service provider (GSP) selling goods-or services to an Online customer through the network system (Figure 13). An after-sales-service and customer care (ASCC) center for issuing an electronic ASCC voucher defining an ASCC program related to sales of said goods-or-services wherein said electronic ASCC vouchers are provided for transmitting over said network to said customer to control and transmit said electronic voucher for paying for said ASCC program by using said value represented by said ASCC voucher (i.e. the user logs onto the warranty administrator's web site to purchase the warranty of the product purchased, the conditions and terms of the warranty are transmitted to the customer electronically) [0053 0054 0055 0057 0102 0109]; a plurality of after-sales-service customer care (ASCC) providers connected to said network [0080]; transmitting said ASCC voucher from said Online customer and providing direct contact between the online customer and ASCC provider to enable to arrange for said ASCC program [0102 0109].

With respect to the after-sales service customer care (ASCC) center providing an incentive voucher for enabling said customer to reward said ASCC provider according to a customer satisfaction assessment by said customer. Thomson teaches that the warranty administrator issues satisfaction surveys to the customer in which the customer can rate the service received [0081]. Thomson does not specifically disclose using the incentive voucher/ satisfaction assessment as a form of rewarding the service provider for the service received. Trelfold on the other hand, teaches issuing retail vouchers for individual performance (page 2). It would have been obvious for a person

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of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included in the system of Thomson the teachings of Trefold of using the incentive vouchers/satisfaction assessment as a form of rewarding the service provider for the service provided because such a modification would motivate the service providers to increase productivity and quality.

### **Response to Arguments**

4. The 112, 2<sup>nd</sup> rejection has been withdrawn.
5. Applicant argues that in Thompson the customer doesn't have much control because the customer does not control anything of value that can be used as payment or reward. Applicant wants to point out that the claims were rejected under 103 by Thompson in view of article by Sally Treford titled, "Choice rewards", hereinafter Treford and therefore the claims should be argue accordingly. Trefold teaches individual receiving performance vouchers which allows the individuals to choose their own reward and **allowing the individuals to select the service provider in which to redeem the services** (see pages 2-3). The combination of Thompson and Trefold teaches allowing the customers to select the care provider of their choice in order to provide versatility (in Trefold, page 3, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph).
6. Applicant argues that Thomson doesn't teach receiving an electronic voucher defining an ASCC program and representing a value corresponding to a selection and purchase of said ASCC program that it is transmitted over the network as a computer file. The Examiner disagrees with Applicant because the combination of Thompson and



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Trefold teach the customers receiving performances vouchers that they can transmit to the service providers of their choice as payment or rewards for service, see Trefold pages 2-3. The performance vouchers having value because it represents a compensation for services rendered. As far as the vouchers being transmitted over the network as a computer file. Official Notice is taken that it is old and well known to provide data as computer file over the network in order to provide convenience. It would have been obvious in the combination of Thompson and Trefold to have included providing the vouchers as a computer file over the network in order to provide convenience in managing and transmitting the performance vouchers.

7. Applicant argues that Thompson doesn't teach an electronic voucher that is transmitted over the network and allows the customer to transmit for making payment to a service provider. The Examiner disagrees with Applicant because the claims as amended is taught by Trefold which teaches receiving performance vouchers which allows the individuals to transmit the performance voucher (electronic voucher ) to the service provider of their choice as payment/reward for the service performed(see pages 2-3). With respect to the vouchers being transmitted electronically, Trefold is silent as to the method of transmission of the vouchers to the service providers but Official Notice is taken that it is old and well known to provide data as computer file over the network in order to provide convenience and rapidness.

**Conclusion**

8. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

**Point of contact**

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Raquel Alvarez whose telephone number is (571)272-6715. The examiner can normally be reached on 9:00-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Robert A. Weinhardt can be reached on (571)272-6633. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Raquel Alvarez/  
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3688

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/R. A./  
9/15/2009